Internet Addiction – Does it Really Exist?

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Did you know that compulsive e-mailing and text messaging could soon become classified as an official brain disease? An editorial in the American Journal of Psychiatry a few months back said that Internet addiction - including excessive gaming and e-mail/text messaging - is a common compulsive-impulsive disorder that should be added to psychiatry's official guidebook of mental disorders.

I think if this happens, we could all be in trouble. There definitely is a debate going on among users as to whether or not there actually is such an addiction and question who is to blame, if anyone. Some people agree that it is possible to become addicted to the Internet, while others think that the argument is without merit and that enjoying the benefits of surfing the Internet is not the same as getting pleasure from an addictive substance.

I guess before one can determine the answer to these questions, it's necessary to define exactly what the word "addiction" means in this instance. To be diagnosed with IAD (Internet Addiction Disorder), a person must meet certain criteria as prescribed by the American Psychiatric Association. Three or more of these criteria must be present at any time during a twelve month period. In the case of IAD, an addiction can be defined as any activity that takes over one's life; instead of being an enjoyable addition to their routine, it becomes a way to manage anxiety, stress, loneliness and depression that one feels when offline, or that interferes with their daily responsibilities.

Although studies do support that it is only a very small percentage of online users (some say 5 to 10%) that are addicted to the Internet, it did push me to stop and re-evaluate my personal usage and the amount of time I spend each day on the Internet. Aside from the time I spend for work related activities, I also utilize it for many other purposes, such as banking, bill paying, shopping, travel arrangements, directions, research and the list goes on. Do I find the Internet extremely useful? Yes. Am I addicted? No. How am I so sure? Well, when recently faced with the decision to either continue surfing the Internet or watch a live Bruce Springsteen concert in high-def on cable, it was no contest. However, that doesn't mean I can't attempt to cut down a little, which I think I will do come 2009.

Maybe it's time to pick up those knitting needles again.
In closing, I would like to remind everyone that our annual "Year in Wireless" supplement is included with this issue. Highlights of this special edition include features summarizing important technological milestones achieved this year in a

variety of industries along with contributions from members of the four major industry alliances: Wi-Fi, WiMAX, Bluetooth SIG and ZigBee.

From the WDD staff, our best wishes for a very safe and happy holiday!

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